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## STUDIES IN THE SOURCES OF THE SOCIAL REVOLT IN 1381

### V-VI.

#### V. THE DEATH OF TYLER.

AN investigation of the tragedy at Smithfield should begin with a few words on the remarkable man about whose death the action centers. For although he has received some attention from modern historians,<sup>1</sup> no one has yet attempted to put together what we may actually know of him from all available contemporary sources. Nor can the special investigator find excuse in the fact that this testimony is very meager in character, and was written by men inflamed by hostility towards the revolt and its leader.

As in the case of Jack Cade in 1450, we are at the outset confronted by the question whether there were one or two chief rebel leaders by the name of Wat Tyler in 1381. No less an authority than the late Bishop of Oxford was of the opinion that among the several leaders by the name of Tyler in 1381, there were two Walters. He identifies Walter Tyler of Maidstone mentioned by Stowe, with one called a Kentishman in the act of attainder of 1381, and considers him a different individual from Walter Tyler, of Essex, who figures in the jury indictments.<sup>2</sup> But this act of attainder merely mentions Tyler as captain of Kent, and not as a Kentishman.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, it is evident from the *Anonymous*

<sup>1</sup> Among modern authorities Tyler has met with very unfavorable treatment at the hands of Pauli and Bergenroth (*Geschichte von England*, IV. 531; *Hist. Zeitschrift*, II. 75), and especially by Réville (*Soulèvement*, II. 54); Rogers is much more favorable (*Agriculture and Prices*, I. 94; *Work and Wages*, 262). Maurice exaggerates his importance, and places him and Ball with Langton as the great popular leaders of the Middle Ages (Tyler, Ball and Oldcastle, 25). The best modern estimates are those of Petit-Dutaillis, in Réville, *Soulèvement*, LXXVIII., and Tait, *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, sub "Tyler."

<sup>2</sup> *Const. Hist.* (4th ed.), II. 478. William Tegheler of Stonestreet (*Arch. Cant.*, III. 93) and Simon Tyler of Cripplelegate (*Rot. Parl.*, III. 112) are leaders or culprits of local importance not otherwise mentioned. The pretty story about John, the tiler of Dartford, whose Roman revenge on the tax-collector for the outrage on his daughter caused the rebellion there, may have some foundation of truth; but in Stowe's own narrative, this is not the Kentish leader (Stowe, *Annales*, 284).

<sup>3</sup> *Rot. Parl.* III. 175: "Quex.malfesours en les dites countes ascunes de eux lour furent capitaines principales, chevyntheynes . . . come Wauter Tylere del countes de Kent, Jakke Strawe en Essex, John Hanchach en le counte de Cantebr'; Robert Phippe en le countee de Hountyngdon."

*French Chronicle*, from which Stowe drew his information, that the Maidstone band, of which Tyler was captain, committed the very acts of rebellion in Canterbury and in Kent for which Tegheler of Essex was indicted as leader by the Kentish juries.<sup>1</sup> This was the same individual who acted as spokesman of the insurgents at Blackheath,<sup>2</sup> and who figured as their chief captain and spokesman at Mile End and Smithfield.

Because the continuation of Knighton tells us that at Smithfield Tyler's name was changed to that of "Jakke Strawe," Mr. Trevelyan believes that his identity is much in doubt, and inclines to Stubbs's opinion.<sup>3</sup> But this continuation was written at Leicester, and the writer was ill informed on London events.<sup>4</sup> All chroniclers who wrote nearer London, or were well informed, and the official city record of the revolt, call the Smithfield leader Walter Tyler.<sup>5</sup> Besides this there is an abundance of testimony to show that Strawe was captain of Essex as Tyler was of Kent.<sup>6</sup> A mistake of confounding the two chief leaders of the insurgents is easily explained.

The identity of Tyler is established beyond a doubt by the Kentish jury indictments. The jurymen of Maidstone, where he was elected captain, would certainly have known whether he was their fellow-townsmen, and they distinctly inform us that he was from Colchester.<sup>7</sup> This statement finds confirmation in two other indictments taken at the same time by men of the country through which he passed, viz.: those of Faversham and Downhamford, which tell us that he was an Essex man.<sup>8</sup> Our chain of evidence is completed by the statement of a reliable contemporary chronicler to the effect that a tiler of Essex was spokesman of the insurgents at Blackheath.<sup>9</sup> It is interesting to know, as well as confirmatory of the above conclusion, that John Ball, prophet and chief organizer of the revolt, was likewise of Colchester, from which, as I hope to show at some future time, the revolt was originally fostered and organized.

It has been generally assumed by modern authorities that Wat

<sup>1</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 512, 518.

<sup>2</sup> *Contin. Eulog.*, 352.

<sup>3</sup> *England in the age of Wycliffe*, 367; Knighton, II. 137. The same mistake is made by John Malverne (Higden's *Polychronicon*, IX. 5), who wrote at Worcester after 1394, and in a contemporary poem on the Revolt (Wright, *Pal. Poems and Songs*, I. 136) and in *A Fifteenth Century London Chronicle* (Ed. Tyrrel, 74).

<sup>4</sup> Below, 467.

<sup>5</sup> For example, *An. Fr. Chr.*, 518-520; Mon. Evesham, 29; Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.* I. 463-465; Riley *Memorials*, 451.

<sup>6</sup> The act of attainder just cited; *Hist. Angl.* II. 9; Froissart, IX. 390.

<sup>7</sup> Powell and Trevelyan, *Peasants' Rising and the Lollards*, 9.

<sup>8</sup> *Arch. Cant.*, III. 92-93.

<sup>9</sup> *Contin. Eul.*, 352.

was a tiler by trade, and he is indeed so called by two contemporary chroniclers.<sup>1</sup> This assumption, however, has probably been drawn from his name by both contemporary and modern authorities. But in the latter part of the fourteenth century a man's name did not usually furnish a clue to his occupation. Chaucer, for example, was no shoemaker,<sup>2</sup> and an examination of the poll-tax rolls of 1381 will show that the same is true for the peasantry there enumerated.<sup>3</sup> To judge from the character of the revolt, and from Tyler's behavior at Smithfield, it indeed seems likely that, like the men he led, he was a peasant.

Of his previous life we know practically nothing. Froissart's characteristic anecdote of his revenge on Richard Lyons has found some acceptance. During the French war Tyler had been page to this London merchant, who had on one occasion beaten him; this Tyler never forgave, but as soon as he obtained control of London beheaded his old master. From our previous experience with Froissart we may assume that this is probably a mere rumor used to find a motive for Lyons's death, which was in reality occasioned by quite another cause.<sup>4</sup> We likewise know very little of Tyler's character. Walsingham and Froissart, the only chroniclers who dilate on this point, are agreed in considering him a villain and an impudent rogue. As their testimony is confined to bad names and denunciations, it requires no refutation in detail.<sup>5</sup> Neither does that of John Gower's allegorical poem, *Vox Clamantis*, in which Tyler is likened to a jay, and called a chief of hell, a demon among a legion of devils.<sup>6</sup> Nor can we infer that he was a boasting demagogue, drunk with his glittering fortune, and having lost every notion of reality,<sup>7</sup> from the fact that he cracked a joke in his command to the abbot of St. Alban's to do justice to the townsmen. His reputed insolence at Smithfield seems, in our best informed source, to have been rather the lack of manners than anything else.<sup>8</sup>

Whatever his character, there can hardly be question as to the ability of Tyler. Gower's statement as to the eloquence of the jay "*edoctus in arte loquendi*," finds confirmation in the continuation of

<sup>1</sup> *Contin. Eul.*, as above; Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, I. 463.

<sup>2</sup> The value of the illustration is not affected by the question whether we shall retain the old etymology of Chaucer or adopt the new one suggested in the *Athenaeum*, Jan.-June, 1899, pp. 145, 210, 242, 274, 338, 435, 468.

<sup>3</sup> In the Suffolk roll, for example, very few of the peasantry have names indicative of their trade. Powell, *East Anglia Rising*, 67-119.

<sup>4</sup> *Chroniques*, IX. 400-401. He had been convicted of various frauds by the good Parliament, but was spared by royal favor. Trevelyan, *Age of Wycliffe*, 10, 11, 24.

<sup>5</sup> *Hist. Angl.*, I. 463-464; *Chroniques*, IX. 410, 412.

<sup>6</sup> *Vox Clamantis* (ed. H. O. Coxe, London, 1850), 46.

<sup>7</sup> *Soulèvement*, 11.

<sup>8</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 518-519.

the *Eulogium*, which tells us that he was very eloquent.<sup>1</sup> To this eloquence his ascendancy over the insurgents was no doubt partly due. For on the most important occasions—at Blackheath, Mile End and Smithfield—he acted as their spokesman. That he enjoyed their confidence and respect is evident from the testimony of Walsingham to the effect that he was the idol of the peasants, who thought that there would never be a greater in the kingdom than he, nor would laws of the land proceeding from any other source be valid.<sup>2</sup> The same chronicler, who is bitterest of all against him, grudgingly acknowledges his ability, in that he tells us that he was a shrewd man, endowed with great intelligence,<sup>3</sup> if only it had been applied to right purposes. This estimate is confirmed by what we can ascertain of his leadership of the revolt. From Maidstone, where he was elected captain, to Smithfield, where he fell a victim to the peasants' cause, Tyler seems to have been the chief director of the movement. It was he who carried on the negotiations with the Bishop of Rochester at Blackheath, who presented the demands of the insurgents at Mile End, and also their last requirements at Smithfield.<sup>4</sup> The levies of the shires about London were summoned in his name and, when the townsmen of St. Alban's wished to proceed against their abbot, they first obtained his permission and advice, swearing to obey his instructions.<sup>5</sup> A strong proof of his importance as a leader is the complete collapse of the revolt after his death at Smithfield.

It required ability above the common thus to lead a great and motley rebellion; to curb the populace and at the same time keep in harmony with the other leaders, some of whom, like John Ball and Jack Straw, captain of Essex, probably had followings as strong as his own; to keep to the last about him the most formidable elements of the insurrection in support of demands which, as will soon appear, were far too radical for the times.

The following is the traditional idea of the events at Smithfield, which resulted in the death of Tyler, as given in the picturesque account of Green:<sup>6</sup>

“Many of the Kentishmen dispersed at the news of the king's pledge to the men of Essex, but a body of thirty thousand still surrounded

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 252: “Unus tegulator de Essex qui valde eloquens fuerat.”

<sup>2</sup> *Hist. Angl.*, I. 468: “Idolum rusticorum . . . nunquam putaverunt majorum in regno futurum, nec leges terrae de caetero valituras.”

<sup>3</sup> “Vir virsutus et magno sensu praeditus, si ingenium decrevisset bonis usibus adaptasse.

<sup>4</sup> *Contin. Eulog.*, 252; *An. Fr. Chr.*, 517, 519.

<sup>5</sup> Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, I. 469.

<sup>6</sup> *Hist. Engl. People*, I. 478-479.

Wat Tyler when Richard on the morning of the fifteenth encountered that leader by a mere chance at Smithfield. Hot words passed between his train and the peasant chieftain who advanced to confer with the king, and a threat from Tyler brought on a brief struggle in which the mayor of London, William Walworth, struck him with his dagger to the ground. 'Kill! kill!' shouted the crowd, 'they have slain our captain!' But Richard faced the Kentishmen with the same cool courage with which he faced the men of Essex. 'What need ye, my masters!' cried the boy-king as he rode boldly up to the front of the bowmen. 'I am your captain and your king; follow me!' The hopes of the peasants centered in the young sovereign; one aim of their rising had been to free him from the evil counsellors who, as they believed, abused his youth, and at his word they followed him with a touching loyalty and trust till he entered the Tower. His mother welcomed him within its walls with tears of joy. 'Rejoice and praise God,' Richard answered, 'for I have recovered to-day my heritage which was lost and the realm of England!''

In reality, the events were quite different. The meeting was not an accident, but a prearranged affair in which the King was to acquiesce in demands in addition to those granted on the previous day at Mile End. The insurgents were first on the field, and when the royal train arrived on the opposite side, Walworth was sent to conduct Tyler into the King's presence. Tyler complied and rode across the extensive field. Dismounting, he knelt before the King and assured him, in crude fashion, of the loyalty of the commons. At Richard's request he presented their demands, which required, in addition to the Mile End articles, some further safeguards against the statute of laborers, apportionment of the forest, free hunting and fishing, and a radical reformation of the church in the interests of the commons. The King accepted these demands, and promised to embody them in a charter. Tyler then refreshed himself with a tankard of beer and mounted his horse to return to his men. During these negotiations the King's followers had surrounded Tyler in a manner which prevented him from being seen across the broad field by his own men. One of their number, a young Kentish nobleman, having obtained the King's permission, deliberately and repeatedly insulted Tyler, evidently with the intention of provoking him into some act which would give a pretext for his arrest. This was accomplished when Tyler at length drew his dagger, and, while resisting arrest at the mayor's hands, he was struck down by the mayor of London and the royal retinue. The insurgents on the other side of the field had not seen what actually occurred, and were told that their leader was being knighted. But when they saw a horse dash from the crowd, and the rider, who was actually their leader, fall to the earth, they become suspicious and began to draw their bows. Then the young King bravely rode across the field

and commanded them to meet him at St. John's Field. They were told that the new knight, their leader, would meet them there. So they marched to St. John's Field, but not with the King at their head, for he went there by another route. Meanwhile the mayor had ridden back to London and called out the military levy of the city, which had been waiting in readiness. Commanded by the aldermen they issued from the different gates and surrounded the insurgents, and when the mayor appeared bearing Tyler's head on the point of a lance, the insurgents were panic-stricken and glad enough to return home with the achievement of the articles of Mile End. The death of Tyler, however, was no accident, but a state murder, the chief part of a successful scheme to effect the dispersal of the insurgents. The plot was hatched in the King's council, and was daringly carried out by London's intrepid mayor and England's youthful King.

So radical a departure from the accepted view obviously requires a full investigation of the chief historical sources of the event. Green's account is nothing more than a condensation of Froissart, who has been relied upon to a greater or less extent by all modern authorities.<sup>1</sup> Other historians have based their accounts on that of Walsingham, which in some respects confirms Froissart's,<sup>2</sup> and even the latest writers have assigned weight to his statements.<sup>3</sup> We must therefore briefly consider the value of Walsingham's work, the *Chronica Majora*.

In the previous investigation on the *Evesham Chronicle*<sup>4</sup> it was shown that both the *Chronicon Angliae* and the *Historia Anglicana* were derived from a common original, the lost *Chronica Majora Sancti Albani*. This is also true of their account of the rising in 1381, which is evidently derived from the same source.<sup>5</sup> Our investigation is therefore concerned with the historical value of this lost original.

Let us first attempt to establish the time of its origin. The independent part of the *Historia Anglicana* begins in 1377 and ends in 1422. Mr. Riley has already shown that the section 1377-1392 was written after April 23, 1394, because in 1378 the author refers to Sir Hugh Caverley, who died on that date, as dead.<sup>6</sup> As the

<sup>1</sup> Bergenroth gives practically a translation. *Hist. Zeitschrift*, II. 79-81.

<sup>2</sup> *Gesch. v. England*, IV. 532; Maurice, *Tyler, Ball and Oldcastle*, 180-181; Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* (4th ed.), II. 480-481.

<sup>3</sup> Viz., Trevelyan, (242-243) and Petit-Dutaillis (Réville, xciv).

<sup>4</sup> Above, 269-270.

<sup>5</sup> The *Historia* contains additional matter on the local revolt at St. Alban's, but this too is derived from the same original. For it is also to be found in Walsingham's *Gesta Abbatum Sancti Albani* (ed. H. T. Riley, *Rolls Series*, 1876-1879), which is based on the *Chronica Majora* (*Ibid.*, II. 109; III. 332).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I. x.

same passage is to be found in the *Chronicon Angliae*<sup>1</sup> it must have been in their common original, and the corresponding part of the *Chronica Majora* must have originated after the same date. This part, however, must have been written before the accession of the House of Lancaster in 1399. For the *Chronica Majora* contained the objectionable references to John of Lancaster, which are still to be found in the *Chronicon Angliae* and other derivatives, but which the *Historia Anglicana* omitted or changed.<sup>2</sup> The account of the revolt in the *Chronica Majora* must therefore have been written between thirteen and eighteen years after the occurrence. The few known details of Walsingham's life have been ably discussed by Dr. Gairdner and Mr. Riley.<sup>3</sup> Suffice it here to say that he was precentor and scriptorarius of St. Alban's abbey for some time previous to September 4, 1397, when he was elected prior of Wymundham. In the early part of 1397<sup>4</sup> he returned to the abbey, and devoted the remainder of his days to historical work. His death occurred after August 31, 1422.<sup>5</sup>

Walsingham's work is a valuable and important source for English history from 1377 to 1422. His account of the revolt is the longest contemporary narrative in our possession, numbering seventy one pages of the printed text in the Rolls edition. It is, however, much influenced by local surroundings, and is about what might be expected from a monk whose abbey had been grievously injured by the insurrection. Though violently prejudiced, his account of the local revolt at St. Alban's, which comprises the greater part of his narrative, is vivid and detailed,—being evidently the work of an eyewitness. On the other hand, London events are very inaccurately described. Of the three most important occurrences in the city, the meeting at Mile End, the siege of the Tower, and the meeting at Smithfield, he omits the first altogether, gives a wrong description of the second,<sup>6</sup> and is ignorant of the purpose of the third. His principal efforts are reserved for the wrongs committed by the insurgents, and he never loses an occasion of pouring out the vials of his wrath upon them, exhausting his Latin vocabulary in terms of

<sup>1</sup> *Hist. Angl.*, I. 372; *Chr. Angl.*, 201.

<sup>2</sup> *Chr. Angl.*, xxx-xxxiv.

<sup>3</sup> Gairdner, J., *Early Chroniclers of England* (London n. d.), 270-272; *Hist. Angl.*, II. pp. x, xx-xxi.

<sup>4</sup> He so states in *Gesta Abbatum* (III. 436) that he was recalled by Abbot John de la Moote "paululum post suam installationem." Now this installation took place on St. Clement's day, Jan. 23, 1397 (*Gesta*, III. 433). Riley states that he returned in 1400 (*Hist. Angl.*, II. xx), but without citing his authority.

<sup>5</sup> He refers in his narrative to the death of Charles VI. of France, which occurred on that date (*Hist. Angl.*, II. 344).

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I. 458-459.



revilement.<sup>1</sup> This is no longer the work of a chronicler seeking to relate the truth, but that of an advocate striving to place the insurgents in the worst light possible.

Let us now consider some of the statements of Walsingham that have been generally accepted. To him we owe our idea of the character and composition of the rebel army which refused to leave London and afterwards faced the King at Smithfield. The court indeed made every effort to induce them to retire. While the main band of the insurgents, under pretext of the King's grant to search out and behead all traitors were killing the Archbishop, the treasurer and the other victims, the King's chancery was engaged in the work of issuing the promised charters of freedom. For this purpose the Earl of Arundel had been temporarily appointed chancellor and given custody of the great seal, soon after the arrival of the royal train at the Tower Royal. A large number of clerks was set to work drawing up the promised charters, which were delivered free of charge.<sup>2</sup> Judging from the survivals, two forms of pardons were issued: general charters of manumission and pardon for all serfs within the shire, directed to the sheriffs of the different counties, and particular letters, directed to lords of liberties and manors. The latter were given to the representatives of dependent villis and towns.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the next day the work of liberation continued, and the number of insurgents in the city steadily decreased. Leaving representatives behind to receive the promised charters, many of the contingents retired homewards. By the afternoon of the following day, probably half of their army had departed.

Who were they that remained? According to Walsingham it was the Kentishmen; the men of Essex returned home. Modern authors try to explain his theory by the supposition that the former were mainly serfs, and therefore satisfied with the concessions of Mile End, but that these did not go far enough for the latter, who, being freemen, cherished political grievances. According to Stubbs it was the political rebels of Kent who beheaded the ministers and committed the outrages of Friday, and Bergenroth thinks that, by granting the articles at Mile End, the King shrewdly separated the cause of the servile from that of the free peasantry. This entire hypothesis is based on the supposition that it was chiefly the

<sup>1</sup> The townsmen of St. Alban's are "fallax turba, gens perfida, populus dolosus, viri mendaces, homines fraudulentum, proximi vicini invidi, beneficiis semper ingrati . . . ut vere iniquitatis filii, patrem totius ingratitudinis et mendaciorum, diabolum imitantes" (*Hist. Angl.*, II. 30). The insurgents who slew the Archbishop were "ribaldi, perditissimi, ganeones, daemoniaci" (*ibid.*, I. 459). The originators of the revolt in Essex were "quinque millia villissimorum communium et rusticorum" (*ibid.*, 454).

<sup>2</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 518; Froissart, IX. 406.

<sup>3</sup> *Chron. Adae de Usk*, 2; Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, I. 467, 473.

men of Essex who met the King at Mile End.<sup>1</sup> But we have seen in the preceding paper that *all* of the insurgents about London were present at Mile End to receive the King's grant. Both Essex and Kentishmen participated in the execution of the ministers and other political outrages; in fact, Tyler, Ball and Straw, the trio which controlled the revolt and led those who remained at London, were all Essex men.<sup>2</sup> We have seen how freemen as well as serfs profited by the articles of Mile End, and that the latter were political as well as social. And we shall find among the demands made by the insurgents at Smithfield an article intended for the benefit of the serfs only.<sup>3</sup>

In these demands of Smithfield the answer to our question is to be found. Those remained behind who wished to achieve more radical ideals, both political and economic, than had been conceded at Mile End, but especially those who desired to reform the church according to the religious ideals of John Ball, for which the great masses of English peasantry could not be depended upon to endanger such vital interests as the abolition of serfdom, labor services, and the statute of laborers. Men of Kent and London were indeed there, but also men of Essex, the home of Ball, where his teachings had been longest propagated, and serfs, as well as freemen were among them.

For the negotiations between Tyler as leader of the insurgents and the royal council we are again dependent on Walsingham, who alone mentions them.<sup>4</sup> He tells us that Tyler refused to give a statement of his demands until the following night, and rejected three separate forms of charter drawn up for his approval. He demanded a commission to behead all lawyers, and was said to have openly boasted that within four days all laws would issue from his mouth,<sup>5</sup> but in reality he was only trying to gain time in order to burn and despoil London. Our previous experience with Walsingham warrants us in rejecting this narrative, especially as the demands actually made by Tyler were nothing like these supposed requirements.<sup>6</sup> The latter was right, though, in supposing that the council

<sup>1</sup> Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* (3d ed.), II, 480, 483; Bergenroth, *Hist. Zeitschrift*, II, 78; Pauli, *Gesch. v. Engl.*, IV, 530-531; Petit-Dutaillis (Réville, lxxix); Tait, *Dict. Nat. Biog.*, sub "Tyler."

<sup>2</sup> Riley (*Memorials*, 450) and Walsingham, (*Hist. Angl.*, II, 15) tell us that an Essex man beheaded the Archbishop.

<sup>3</sup> A reiteration of the demand for the abolition of serfdom, *An. Fr. Chr.*, 519.

<sup>4</sup> *Hist. Angl.*, I, 463-464. He has been followed by all modern authorities attempting to give details.

<sup>5</sup> This reputed boast in regard to the law has been accepted by Pauli (*Gesch. v. England*, IV, 533) and is used with fine effect by Shakespeare in his impersonation of Jack Cade. *Henry VI.*, Pt. II., act IV., scene VI.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the sixth article of this series.

was trying to induce Tyler to withdraw his forces from London, on the basis of the articles granted at Mile End. For in the morning of the same day a proclamation had been made that all the commons should return home, but this was not heeded. Tyler evidently insisted that the King again meet the insurgent army and grant a new series of demands, and this was conceded. Royal proclamation was accordingly made summoning the commons to Smithfield at vespers of the same day.<sup>1</sup> The chroniclers have left charming accounts of how the King, followed by a train of 200 retainers, prepared himself for the coming ordeal by solemn religious devotions at Westminster in the afternoon (3 p. m.).<sup>2</sup>

In connection with the accepted version of the meeting at Smithfield there are two incidents which are of themselves surprising and which certainly deserve explanation. One of these is the conduct of Tyler himself. Is it not strange that a man accredited by his enemies with having good sense should have begun an unprovoked quarrel with an unoffending knight, instead of trying to get the King's assent to the articles which it was his business to present? Another surprise is afforded by the conduct of Tyler's followers. Would an infuriated multitude, which had just slain the primate of England and even threatened the King himself with death, have stood tamely by while its beloved leader was being slain, without even raising a hand in his behalf? The strange conduct of Tyler can best be considered in the account of the meeting which will be presently given. The action of the insurgent army, however, requires immediate consideration.

Did the insurgents witness Tyler's death? According to Walsingham they did, and this view is also maintained by the continuation of Knighton's *Chronicle*. Let us briefly consider the historical value of this new testimony. The fifth book of Knighton's *Chronicle* is, in reality, a continuation, the author of which was indeed a monk of Leicester abbey,<sup>3</sup> but not Knighton himself.<sup>4</sup> His account of the revolt at Leicester is detailed and good, but his narrative of London events is inferior, as we should naturally ex-

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 518. According to *Contin. Eulog.*, 353, it was proclaimed that John of Lancaster with 20,000 Scots was coming against the King, and that the commons should assemble at Smithfield to aid him. This is a fair sample of the rumors current at the time.

<sup>2</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 518. Malverne, 4-5; Mon. Evesham, 28. Froissart (IX. 409) wrongly dates the King's orisons at 9 a. m., instead of the ninth canonical hour (3 p. m.).

<sup>3</sup> This is evident from the frequent references to Leicester and its abbey (*Ibid.*, 125-127, 142-143, 233, 235, 240, 264-266, 313); and from the importance and praise given to John of Gaunt, who possessed Leicester castle and was patron of the abbey (*Ibid.*, 143-149, 207, 208, 313). In spite of his protection of the Lollards and his notorious immorality, John is always for him "*pius dux*" (*ibid.*, 157, 193, 208, 210).

<sup>4</sup> This was pointed out by Shirley (*Fasciculi Zizaniorum*, 524, n. 1), and proved by the editor of Knighton (II. xcvi-xcviii).

pect from one writing at such a distance. The chronology is faulty, and the occurrences are related in false sequence.<sup>1</sup> His account of the events at Smithfield is full of errors. Contrary to other sources, he lets the meeting occur in the morning, and confuses Tyler with Straw, who, he says, was slain at Smithfield. His version of the meeting between the King and Tyler is at variance with the other sources,<sup>2</sup> and is evidently based on purest hearsay. It is evident that his testimony does not belong to that of the more reliable authorities.

But a more important source than the one just considered maintains the idea that the insurgents witnessed the death of their leader. A document which seems to be an official city record of the revolt distinctly states that the mayor in the presence "of our lord the king and those standing by him, lords, knights, esquires and citizens on horseback, on the one side, and the whole of this infuriated rout on the other, most manfully by himself rushed upon the captain of the said multitude, Walter Tyler by name, and as he was altercating with the king and the nobles, first wounded him in the neck with his sword, and then hurled him from his horse, mortally pierced in the breast."<sup>3</sup> This document is taken from the letter-books or official records of the city. At the outset it announces its purpose by the statement that the events of Corpus Christi day "seem deserving to be committed to writing that it may not be unknown to those to come."<sup>4</sup> From this and from the contents of the document it is evident that its object was to record the part taken by the city, and particularly by Walworthe, the mayor, in suppressing the revolt. It is therefore a political and not an historical record, the authorized version of the party in power to justify and glorify its own actions. Although it is not dated, the events recorded, as well as its place in the letter-books on the same folio with documents of 1381, indicate that it was contemporaneous, or nearly so, with the insurrection. Being therefore a contemporary, official document, its testimony is of value, as the author certainly had the best possible means of information. On the other hand, its political purpose to exalt the actions of the mayor and his followers renders it liable to distort the truth, especially in the case of "that most renowned man, Sir William Walworthe, the then mayor."

In all of the description of the actions of Walworthe this ten-

<sup>1</sup> In contradiction to other sources he has the rebels enter London on Friday, June 14 (p. 132). They entered the Tower and slew the ministers while the King was at Mile End, and plundered the Savoy after this (134).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 137 ff.

<sup>3</sup> Riley, *Memorials*, 451-452.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 449.

dency is noticeable. Thus in the passage quoted above we are told that he set upon and killed Tyler "most manfully by himself," whereas all the other sources tell us that several participated in the killing, and that the mayor did not inflict the mortal wound. We then hear of an attack of the insurgents, that came with Tyler, on the doughty mayor, who successfully defends himself and escapes unhurt; but of this attack the other sources know nothing.<sup>1</sup> Why should not the same motive, the glorification of his hero, the mayor, have led the writer to describe his great achievement as having been done in the presence of the entire insurgent army? At all events there is room for this suspicion.

But let us see whether all of the sources sanction the hitherto unquestioned hypothesis. We found the anonymous French chronicler the most detailed and reliable of all contemporary historians on the revolt, and concluded that he had probably been an eye-witness at Mile End. Now his description of the meeting at Smithfield is equally vivid and detailed, twice as long, finds even more confirmation among contemporaries.<sup>2</sup> According to his account Tyler was quite a distance away from his men during the struggle, for he spurred his horse towards them, and cried to them for vengeance. But his horse fell at fourscore paces. When the commons saw him fall they did not understand what it meant, as they certainly would had they witnessed his death. Sometime later at St. John's field they learned how he had been slain and were stricken with terror.<sup>3</sup>

The monk of Evesham also implies that the people did not know of Tyler's fate when he tells us that immediately afterwards they demanded to know where their leader was.<sup>4</sup> Froissart, although he lets the people learn of the tragedy in time to bring in the traditional scene, tells us that during the struggle the King's retinue so environed Tyler about that his people could not see him.<sup>5</sup> But most direct of any is the testimony of the *Continuation of the Eulogium*, which tells us that during the struggle the people asked what the King was doing with their advocate, implying that they did not know what was happening. They were informed that

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the account given later, for this and the preceding statement.

<sup>2</sup> This will appear in detail in my narrative of the event.

<sup>3</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 520: "Le comons luy vierent chaier et ne scavoient en certayne coment il fust. . . . Pur ceo que ils vierent que lor cheifteine Wat Tighler fust morte en tiel manner chayerount al terre en my des blees come gentz discomfitees."

<sup>4</sup> Mon. Evesham, 29: "Unde cito post populo clamanti, 'Ubi est dux noster?' rex, prout deus voluit, inter eos equitando insiliens respondit clamando, 'Ego sum dux vester sequimini me.'"

<sup>5</sup> *Chroniques*, IX. 413: "Sitot comme il fu cheus entre pies, on l'environna de toute pars, par quoy il ne fust veus des assambles qui la estoient et qui se dissoient ses gens."

he was being made a knight, and led to believe that he would re-join them in St. John's field.<sup>1</sup>

The *Continuation of the Eulogium*<sup>2</sup> (1364-1413) is the work of an unknown author, who may have been a monk of Canterbury.<sup>3</sup> Although the latter part was written later, the account of 1381 originated before 1404.<sup>4</sup> According to Mr. Haydon, the editor, the narrative is independent of all known chronicles, and its statements are generally confirmed by contemporaries; the number of errors is below the average.<sup>5</sup> This is certainly true of the narrative of the revolt, which is an entirely independent account, full of new information. Its main outlines are confirmed by other chronicles, even its new statements finding corroboration in sources since published.<sup>6</sup> A careful comparison of its account of the revolt with the other sources has convinced me that although terse and not entirely free from errors, this is one of the most reliable contemporary sources.

Let us now briefly sum up the evidence. For the accepted view, that Tyler was killed in sight of his men, are Walsingham and Knighton, both of whom wrote at a distance from London, and whose version of London events is otherwise untrustworthy, and a city record, official and contemporary indeed, but which we have reason to believe distorted the event. Froissart's testimony counts both ways; the insurgents did not witness Tyler's death, but learned of it immediately afterwards. Against the usual view is the testimony of the anonymous French chronicler, who was probably an eye-witness, the monk of Evesham and the continuer of the *Eulogium*,—all of whom our investigations have proved reliable sources. Our verdict must therefore be that the insurgents did not witness their leader's death. On this hypothesis alone we can see why they did not interfere to save or avenge him, and were so easily persuaded to seek St. John's field. From this point of view I shall endeavor to

<sup>1</sup> *Contin. Eulog.*, 354: "Clamabat autem comitiva: 'Quid facit rex cum nostro prolocutore?' Dixerunt alii: 'Facit eum militem.' Et clamaverunt omnes: 'Transite in campum Sancti Johannis et veniet ad vos novus miles.'"

<sup>2</sup> *Eulogium Historiarum sive Temporis, a monacho quodam Malmesburiensi exaratum*, (ed. F. S. Haydon, R. S.) 1858-1863. This work is a well-known compendium of history extending till 1366. Our continuation is one of several published in the third volume.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* III. lii, n. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, I. Under 1382 reference is made to the Duke of Burgundy, who died in 1404, as then holding the county of Flanders. *Ibid.*, 355.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, lxxxi.

<sup>6</sup> For example, its accounts of the beginning of the revolt in Essex and Kent (III. 151-152) is confirmed by *An. Fr. Chr.*, 509-510; its notice of the embassy sent by the city of London to the insurgents by the *Coram Rege roll* (*Eulog.*, III. 352; Réville, 190-191).

describe the death of Tyler, using all available sources. The *Anonymous French Chronicle*, which our investigations have shown to be the most detailed and reliable of the sources, will form the basis of my account, but due consideration will be given to other sources.

We remember that Smithfield was then a large open space just without the walls to the north of London. Its extent may be judged from the fact that on Friday the cattle market was held there, and once a year the great St. Bartholomew's fair. On the west side, the commons in great numbers were drawn up in battle array, while the King and his party came from Aldersgate on the opposite side. At vespers the meeting occurred.<sup>1</sup>

On the King's arrival he ordered the mayor of London to ride across the field and summon Tyler into his presence.<sup>2</sup> The latter came on a small horse, and carrying a dagger in his hand, out of mistrust to the royal retinue. Dismounting he dropped on one knee before the King and heartily shook his hand, while uttering the following curious words: "Brother, be of good cheer and joyful; for you will soon have the fifteenth pledged by the commons more than you had before, and we shall be good comrades."<sup>3</sup> From this it would seem that the commons had even thought of a solution of the King's financial difficulties, and that while refusing to pay the poll-tax, had pledged him a fifteenth.<sup>4</sup> To the King's question why the insurgents would not retire home, Tyler responded in a lengthy speech, setting forth that they demanded a more liberal charter than that of Mile End.<sup>5</sup> He declared that the lords of the realm would rue it if these desires were not granted. Richard then inquired what were these additional points, protesting that Tyler should freely have them without contradiction, drawn up in form of a charter and sealed.<sup>6</sup> Wat then rehearsed a series of demands which were for their time perhaps the most radical ever made in England. The King responded favorably, promising all he could possibly grant, saving the regality of his crown<sup>7</sup> an exception to which the

<sup>1</sup> Riley, *Memorials*, 450, confirmed by *An. Fr. Chr.*, 518, and Mon. Evesham, 28. The continuator of Knighton, whose chronology is otherwise weak, has this meeting occur in the morning. II. 137.

<sup>2</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 518-519. This version is to be preferred to that of Walsingham (I. 464), who has Sir John Newton summon Tyler. His supposition, that the whole fray arose because of the latter's anger at being approached on foot, is incredible.

<sup>3</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 519.

<sup>4</sup> On the march to London they made their adherents swear to pay no taxes but the fifteenths their fathers had known. *Hist. Angl.*, I. 455.

<sup>5</sup> *An. Chr.*, 519; Mon. Evesham, 29; *Contin. Eulog.*, 353.

<sup>6</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 519: "Il les auoiet voluntiers sans contradiction escript et enseale."

<sup>7</sup> "Le roy respondist esement et dist que il aueroit toute ceo que il purroit bonement granter, salvant a luy sa regal tie de sa coronne."

commons had themselves agreed in one of their demands<sup>1</sup> and then commanded Tyler to return home without further parley. After this, occurred the event which gave pretext for killing the rebel leader.

Chroniclers are agreed as to the fact that this consisted in some act of audacity on his part which excited the resentment of the King's followers. According to some, he neglected to doff his hood and bow the knee before the King, and was taken to task for this by the mayor.<sup>2</sup> But the same reliable source we have hitherto followed, better informed on details than the rest, tells us that Tyler, who was overheated, called for water and rinsed his mouth, after which he ordered a tankard of beer and drank a great draught in the King's presence. He then mounted his horse in order to ride away. Meanwhile the royal retinue had so surrounded Tyler that he could not be seen by the multitude,<sup>3</sup> and one of the King's followers, a valet<sup>4</sup> of Kent, deliberately began a quarrel with him. Having obtained the King's permission to see Tyler, he stepped forward and declared that he was the greatest thief and robber in Kent. Tyler naturally grew angry, but being too prudent to attack his defamer ordered him to come before him. The latter refused, fearing Wat's attendants, but the lords, wishing to provoke Tyler further, ordered him to obey. Wat then commanded one of his attendants, a standard bearer, to dismount and behead the esquire. The latter said that he did not deserve death, for he had spoken the truth. He justified debating in the King's presence on the plea of self-defense, and reaffirmed his charge. At length, either because he had lost patience, or because he thought himself in danger, Wat drew his dagger.<sup>5</sup> This action in the King's presence gave the desired pretext for his arrest. The mayor of London, whose office it was to arrest him, rushed upon him. Tyler resisted, but his dagger stroke fell harmless upon a cuirass concealed under the mayor's robe, while Walworthe's besclard twice pierced his adversary's neck and breast. The royal retinue then fell upon him. In the mêlée which followed several participated. Ralph Standiche, reputed the King's sword bearer, is said to have pierced Tyler's side, and John Cavendish, an esquire of the King's household, to

<sup>1</sup> Below, p. 479, n. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Contin. Eulog.*, 353; Mon. Evesham, 28; Malverne, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Froissart, IX. 413.

<sup>4</sup> A valet was the son of a nobleman in military service as a page.

<sup>5</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 519. I take this occurrence to be the basis of Walsingham's statements about the quarrel between Tyler and Newton, and of Froissart's account of the former's absurd insolence toward the King's sword bearer. *Hist. Angl.*, I. 464; Froissart. IX. 412-413



have given the death wound.<sup>1</sup> Tyler's attendants indeed mingled in the fray, but they were few in number and soon overpowered.<sup>2</sup> In vain did Wat give the spurs to his horse and cry out to the commons to avenge him. His steed bore him but fourscore paces and he fell to the ground.

Meanwhile the insurgents on the other side of the large field had not seen the assault on their leader. They had perhaps been told that their demands had been granted, but on seeing their leader's horse dash forward and its rider fall to the ground, they were at a loss to understand what had happened. Their suspicions were aroused, and they began to draw their bows. Then young Richard spurring his horse rode over to the threatening multitude, and commanded them to meet him at St. John's field.<sup>3</sup> This brave action probably gave occasion to the fine speeches recorded in several of the chronicles.<sup>4</sup> It is however likely that other means were used to quiet the insurgents. They were probably told that the King had granted their demands, as he actually had.<sup>5</sup> The *Continuation of the Eulogium* maintains that they were given to understand that the King had made a knight of Tyler, who would meet them in St. John's field. This explains the ease with which they were induced to march to the place appointed.

Richard does not seem to have ridden at their head, as is usually supposed, but escorted by a portion of his retinue, to have taken a different route.<sup>6</sup> The greater part of the large retinue that had followed him to Smithfield, deserted on the road, either from cowardice, as one of our sources maintains, or, perhaps,<sup>7</sup> because they could render better assistance with the army of rescue then assembling in London.

<sup>1</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 520; Knighton, II. 137; Froissart, IX. 413; *London Chron.* (ed. Tyrrell), 74. The statement of the city memorial (Riley, 450), that Walworthe alone attacked and slew Tyler, contradicts all these sources as well as the less explicit *Contin. Eulog.*, 254; Mon. Evesham, 29.

<sup>2</sup> That Tyler was attended is evident from the testimony of the *An. Fr. Chr.*, 519, which speaks of a standard bearer, and tells us that the Kentish valet feared his attendants. The city memorial (Riley, 457) probably refers to them when it speaks of those who came with Tyler attacking the mayor. They must have been few in number, for the other sources do not mention them, and they were of no avail in defending him.

<sup>3</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 520. Our source says St. Stephen's field, but from its own testimony later on, and that of others, we know that St. John's field is meant.

<sup>4</sup> The different versions are quoted in Réville, *Soulèvement*, xcv, n. 2.

<sup>5</sup> Walsingham has the King promise them this in his speech. I. 465.

<sup>6</sup> According to *An. Fr. Chr.*, 520, the King commanded them to come to him (*venir a uy*) at St. John's field, not to follow him there. The city memorial (Riley, 451) tells us that Walworthe rode "with our lord the king and his people" towards Whitewellbeach, implying that the multitude took another route, since the mayor had just escaped from them; Walsingham (I. 465) and the monk of Evesham (29) think that the King himself led the insurgents forth.

<sup>7</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 520; Mon. Evesham, 29.

Meanwhile the mayor had ridden back into the city to summon the military levy. But two of the aldermen of the King's train at Smithfield who sympathized with the insurgents, were before him. Walter Sybylle and John Horn had from the beginning aided the rebels, and now made a last effort to save their cause. Dashing through Aldersgate down Westcheap, Sybylle exhorted the citizens to close the gates and man the walls, for now all was lost.<sup>1</sup> They indeed succeeded in closing Aldersgate, but could not prevent the mayor from calling out the citizens to the King's rescue. They assembled in the streets together with the retainers of lords and other men-at-arms in the city, perhaps to the number of seven or eight thousand.<sup>2</sup> It was in the main a levy of London citizens, who, like the retainers, had been waiting in readiness.<sup>3</sup> They were commanded by the mayor and aldermen, among whom John Phelipot, Robert Launde and Nicholas Brember were prominent. Sir Robert Knowles also figured among the leaders, perhaps as commander of the men-at-arms who were not Londoners.<sup>4</sup> After dispatching this army to the King, the mayor led a troop of lances to Smithfield in order to make sure of the death of Tyler. On his arrival there he was informed that the chieftain was mortally wounded and had been conveyed by his comrades into the hospital of St. Bartholomew, where he lay abed in the master's chamber. Walworthe had him dragged forth and beheaded in their presence. The bleeding head was thrust upon a lance's point and born with him in his progress to the King.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile the insurgents advanced along the main road to St. John's field to await the coming of the King. On his arrival they drew up in battle array in accordance with his command.<sup>6</sup> They were probably uncertain as to the fate of their leader, some expecting to see him led forth a knight. According to the city memorial, which assumes that they had seen him perish, they were altercation with the King and his people, "refusing to treat of peace except on condition that they should first have the head of said mayor,"

<sup>1</sup> *Coram Rege roll*; Réville, 194, 197.

<sup>2</sup> Froissart, IX., 414; his estimates of numbers are usually good. Walsingham tells us that there were but one thousand, but that this number was increased on the road. *Hist. Angl.*, I. 466.

<sup>3</sup> Below, p. 476.

<sup>4</sup> According to the city memorial, Walworthe both assembled and led forth the army. Riley, 451. The *Anon. Chr.*, has the mayor send it forth, and then return to Smithfield to dispatch Tyler; the army appeared at St. John's field under command of the aldermen (*ibid.*, 520). According to Walsingham (I. 466) Knowles was chosen captain, with other knights to act under him.

<sup>5</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 520. Mon. Evesham., 29; Malverne, 6.

<sup>6</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, as above.

when he himself arrived with the army of rescue. It is possible that they had in the meanwhile heard of the struggle between him and Tyler, but in the light of our previous investigations, I prefer to follow the *Anonymous French Chronicle*, which tells us the army of citizens, led by the aldermen, first appeared on the scene. Issuing from different gates of the city they surrounded the rebels, and it was after this that the mayor appeared bearing Tyler's head. The King commanded the ghastly trophy to be planted at his side and thanked the mayor, but the commons were stricken with terror and threw themselves on the ground, as people discomfited, crying to the King for mercy.<sup>1</sup>

We must here allow for the exaggeration natural to a partizan source. The insurgents numbered 20,000–30,000 men,<sup>2</sup> while the highest estimate of the King's forces is only 8,000. However, all contemporaries are agreed that the insurgents were glad to come to terms. We have no record of these terms, except that Walsingham informs us that the King gave the charter containing the Smithfield articles.<sup>3</sup> This is in line with his previous statement that Richard promised this in his speech just after Tyler's death, but it seems unlikely in view of the fact that there is no further record of such articles in any of the sources.<sup>3</sup> Some of the royal party, headed by the young King, wished to attack the insurgents, but the more prudent counsel of Sir Robert Knowles prevailed.<sup>4</sup> The insurgents were allowed to disperse unmolested. Most of them retired home peacefully, those who lived south of the Thames being led through London by two knights appointed by the King for that purpose.<sup>5</sup> The understanding seems to have been that the King had sanctioned the revolt up till the meeting at Mile End, and that the articles granted there held good. Throughout the country the peasants thought that their cause had been gained and that a great revolution had been accomplished.<sup>6</sup>

Was the death of Tyler an accident on the part of the King's followers, the deserved result of his insolence, or was it a preconcerted deed, part of a successful plan to effect the dispersal of the insurgents? Let us examine the meager evidence available.

(1) The meeting at Smithfield was so arranged that the multi-

<sup>1</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 520; Malverne, 6.

<sup>2</sup> Froissart, IX. 406, 410; Knighton, II. 138.

<sup>3</sup> We have only to recall the abundance of surviving evidence in regard to the articles at Mile End.

<sup>4</sup> *Hist. Angl.*, I. 466; *Contin. Eulog.*, 354. In line with his idealization of Richard, Froissart represents him as restraining Knowles and the lords. (*Chroniques*, IX. 415).

<sup>5</sup> Malverne, 6.

<sup>6</sup> This is evident from their action in everywhere withdrawing labor service after their return home.

tude did not see what was going on. The King did not ride over to the commons as at Mile End, where they could see him, but stayed on the side of the field nearest London, the gates of which were held by his partizans. Tyler was conducted to the far side of the field out of reach and sight of his men. (2) He was deliberately provoked into an action which would give a pretext for attacking him. After he desired to return, the Kentish valet, with the King's permission, deliberately and repeatedly offered him the greatest insult imaginable. The lords ordered the young nobleman to go before him "*pur veier que il (i. e. Tyler) voideroit faire deuant le roy*,"<sup>1</sup> i. e. to see if he would not commit some act in the King's presence which would give a pretext for arresting or slaying him.<sup>2</sup> (3) Everybody on the King's side was in readiness for the results of Tyler's death. Only half an hour elapsed from the time when the mayor left the King until the army of rescue appeared at St. John's field.<sup>3</sup> It would not have been possible to raise the levy of the twenty-four different wards of London, issue in strategic order from the different gates and surround the rebels in so brief a time, unless these forces had been waiting in readiness. That the lords' retinues and men-at-arms were in readiness is repeatedly stated by Froissart.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the mayor had secured control of the city gates, which up to this time had been opened at the will of the insurgents. Both he and the aldermen wore cuirasses concealed under their robes, else Wat's dagger-thrust would have had quite different results.<sup>5</sup> In this light the religious preparations of the King and his train at Westminster acquire new significance; we can understand why so dangerous an attempt should be thus solemnly ushered in. The details of the plot must have comprised what actually occurred. The King consented to Tyler's radical demands, but with no intention of fulfilling them, in order to get the people away from the city, and to placate them, in view of the intended violence to Tyler. That his death rather than his capture was planned, is rendered likely by the mayor's action in beheading him.

There is an interesting parallel in the case of Guillaume Cîte, the most formidable leader of the Jacquerie, the revolt of the French peasants in 1358. He was invited to a conference by Charles the

<sup>1</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 519.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 519, 520: "*par celle encheson le mair de Londres, William Walworthe par nosme, arenone le dit Wat de celle violence et despitte fait en presence le roy, e luy arresta.*"

<sup>3</sup> Riley, *Memorials*, 451.

<sup>4</sup> *Chroniques*, IX. 402. He exaggerates the number, however, when he rates them at 7,000.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 413.

Bad, King of Navarre, and treacherously murdered, after which his followers were easily dispersed. Now the English had been allies of Charles in this war, and his action must have been known to the members of the council. When we recall the awful death of Edward II. and of Richard II. himself, we can hardly expect that the council would have been troubled with many scruples over removing an intractable rebel, whose influence prevented the insurgents from dispersing. The most likely explanation of Tyler's death is that it was one of the state murders that darken English history.

#### VI. THE ARTICLES OF THE INSURGENTS AT SMITHFIELD.

Probably the most important item of new information given us by the anonymous French chronicler is an enumeration of the demands presented by Tyler at Smithfield. We had formerly only meager information in regard to a single article ;<sup>1</sup> we now probably possess full information on all of them, as far as their substance is concerned. For as we have seen in the foregoing paper, the anonymous chronicler's account of the tragedy at Smithfield is more detailed than his version of Mile End events, and equally trustworthy. We may therefore place equal reliance upon his enumeration of the demands of the insurgents. This conclusion finds confirmation in the fact that the only one of the Smithfield articles elsewhere recorded is found among those given by this invaluable source.<sup>2</sup>

For purposes of perspicuity let us divide the demands of the insurgents at Smithfield into three groups, in line with the character of the separate articles : viz., legal, economic, and, thirdly, such as are at the same time religious and economic.

Of the first class there are two provisions. One of these recites "that there be no law except the statute of Winchester."<sup>3</sup> This was a police regulation for the keeping of the peace—one of the greatest legislative achievements of Edward I. It provides for the ready capture of felons, against whom suit may be brought from town to town. The hundred is held responsible for robberies committed, though forty days grace is allowed to secure the robber. Watch and ward must be maintained in the towns during the night, and all strangers arrested ; if they resist, hue and cry are raised against them. Highways to market towns are to be widened and cleared for 200 feet on either side ; for the enforcement of this provision lords of manors are held responsible, and the hundred must help them if necessary ; they are commanded to remove their parks

<sup>1</sup> Knighton, II. 137.

<sup>2</sup> Below, 479, n. 4.

<sup>3</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 519.

the same distance from the highways or else enclose them with a wall. Finally, every man must keep in his house armor according to his house and goods, from the landholder of £40 and more, who went forth in a knight's equipment, to the peasant who had nothing but a bow and knife. The constables of the hundred hold inspection of this armor twice a year.<sup>1</sup>

It will readily appear why a measure of this description was popular with the lower classes, for it places the power of checking lawlessness in their own hands. As Stubbs aptly observed: "It carries us back to the earliest institutions of the race; it revives and refines the actions of the hundred, hue and cry, watch and ward, the fyrd and the assize of arms."<sup>2</sup> In demanding the abolition of other legislation the commons evidently referred to objectionable police laws enacted since 1285. They probably meant the statutes of laborers, which required new police and judicial machinery, like the justices of the peace and justices of laborers, for their enforcement.<sup>3</sup> For it would have been impossible to get the peasants to arrest or pursue, in the manner provided by the statute of Winchester, recalcitrant comrades resisting unjust labor legislation. They regarded the old law as sufficient for the repression of lawlessness, and the statutes of laborers, both in object and enforcement, as oppressive and useless.

The second legal demand of the insurgents calls for the abolition of outlawry in all processes of law.<sup>4</sup> This demand against one of the most potent factors in early medieval justice may at first thought occasion some surprise. Before the Norman Conquest outlawry was indeed a severe punishment.<sup>5</sup> By setting at naught the summons and decrees of the law the outlaw had lost all of its protection. His property was forfeited and he might be killed with impunity. But with increased gradation of punishment the application and force of outlawry were greatly diminished, so that by the twelfth century it had become rather a process to compel attendance at court than a punishment. The accused had to be summoned in four successive courts, and only in the fifth, if it was a county court, could the decree be passed, a process which, according to a likely surmise, might last two years and a half.<sup>6</sup> Such a condition could

<sup>1</sup> *Statutes of the Realm* (Record Commission), I. 96-98.

<sup>2</sup> Stubbs, *Const. Hist.* (4th ed.), II. 123.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. especially *Statutes*, I. 313, 327, 330, 350-351, 364-365, 366; II. 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 519; "Que nul vtlegarie seroit en nul proces de ley fait de ore en auant."

<sup>5</sup> See the well-known old English poem, "The Exile." *Bibliothek der Angelsächsischen Poesie* (Wülker-Grein), I. 284-290.

<sup>6</sup> Pollock and Maitland, *Hist. of Eng. Law*, I. 539; cf. also *ibid.*, 476-478; II. 449-450, 459, 579.

hardly call for special protest on part of the commons unless some particular incident had brought it vigorously home to them.

In my opinion this incident was the statute of laborers. There were certainly many laborers who fled from their homes in order to avoid prosecution for violation of the law. The enactment of 1360 declares such laborers as cannot be found by the sheriff to be outlaws, and orders writs of their outlawry to be sent to all the shires. If captured, they are to be brought back and imprisoned until they justify themselves and satisfy the plaintiff, and for their falsity they are to be branded in the forehead with an iron shaped to the letter F, unless the plaintiff wishes to put this penalty into respite until the following Michaelmas, when the justices may decree whether it shall be inflicted. The enactment further decrees the punishment of city officials who refuse to deliver up such outlaws.<sup>1</sup>

The two demands just discussed emphasize the importance of the statute of laborers as an existing grievance with the insurgents, thus confirming what we already know from the demand for its repeal at Mile End. This repeal the Smithfield articles presuppose, as the demands at Mile End were granted to all the insurgents. At some future time I hope to show from the *Rolls of Parliament* and the *Statutes of the Realm* how potent this labor legislation was in producing the discontent which found voice in the revolt.

Of the two economic demands of the insurgents at Smithfield one is a repetition of the Mile End provision for the total abolition of serfdom.<sup>2</sup> The other also relates to manorial conditions and goes even further, specifying that in every lordship, save only the royal domains, the woods be apportioned among all the tenants<sup>3</sup>—not apportioned in the modern sense of an actual division, for this would be contrary to medieval conceptions of property in land, but in community of use, as already prevailed on some manors. This gave the peasants the right to use all necessary wood for fuel and building purposes, and also to hunt and fish free of restraint in the forest folds. We know from the testimony of another source that Tyler demanded free hunting and fishing throughout England.<sup>4</sup> The importance of such a provision is evident when we reflect that fish was the only flesh that could be eaten on the many fast days of the

<sup>1</sup> *Statutes*, I. 366, cap. 10–11.

<sup>2</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 519: "Que nul naif seroit en Engleterre ne nul servaige ne naifte, mes toutz estre free et de vn condicione."

<sup>3</sup> "Que nul seigneur aueroit seignurye fors sivelment ester proportionne entre toutz gentz, fors tant solement le seigneur le roy."

<sup>4</sup> Knighton, II. 137: "Petunt a rege ut omnes warennae, tam in aquis quam in parco et boscis, communes fierent omnibus, ita ut libere posset, tam pauper quam dives, ubicunque in regno in aquis et stagnis piscariis et boscis et forestis feras capere, in campis lepores fugare, et sic haec et hujusmodi alia multa sine contradictione exercere."

medieval church and during Lent. Through the winter months, in fact during the greater part of the year game was the only fresh meat available.

The economic demands just noted apply to clerical equally with lay estates. There was, however, a growing consciousness of the need for special measures against the clergy, based on the general desire for a reformation of the church. This desire, in its most radical form, was shared by the insurgents, and finds expression in three articles, which, because of their marked religious character and also because of their far reaching economic effects, may best be termed their religious-economic demands. They may best be considered under three heads: (1) that the goods of the holy church should not remain in the hands of the clergy, neither of parsons and vicars nor of other clergymen, but after allowing for their easy sustenance, the remainder should be divided among the parishioners; (2) that all the lands and tenements of possessioners should be taken from them and divided among the commons of the realm, saving to them a reasonable sustenance; (3) that there should be no bishop in England but one, and no prelate but one.<sup>1</sup>

The first two articles confiscate all clerical property above a reasonable sustenance for the active clergy. They strike clearly and directly at the two principal sources of clerical income, the local revenues as paid by the parish, and the revenues from landed possessions. The former consisted chiefly of the tithes, but comprised also such periodical contributions as fees for burial service, candle-dues, plough-alms, and other local customs. The commons were perfectly willing to pay tithes as far as was necessary for local needs. They distinctly specified the support of the parish clergy, who were favored in all of their demands, as we shall presently see. But this would require only a small portion of the tithes, and the remainder was to revert to the parishioners who paid them. I do not think that the article contemplates a levy of tithes, and afterwards an equitable division of the proceeds, but means that only such taxes are to be levied as are necessary for the support of the parish priests.

The second article aims at the entire possessioned clergy, regular and secular, and affects particularly the hierarchy and the monasteries. At this time, the landed possessions of the clergy com-

<sup>1</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 519: "Que le biens de saint esglise ne deuerioient ester en mains de gentz de relligione, ne des parsons et vicars ne de autres de saint esglise, mes les auante aueroient lour sustenance esement, et le remanent de les biens deuerioient ester deuidees entre les parochiens; et nul euesque seroit en Engleterre forsque vn ne nul prelate forsque vns; et toutz les terres et tenementz de possessioners seroient pris de eux et parties entre les comons, saluant a eux leur resonable sustenance."



prised over one-third of the land of England. They consisted not only of vast manorial estates, yielding both labor and money rents, and the profits of justice when these estates formed independent baronies, but also of forests, harbors, fisheries, mines, rights of pasture, tolls, market dues and other exactions. As in the case of parishes, the revenue from these possessions, saving a pension for the possessioners, is to revert to the commons who paid it. The tenants on clerical lands need no longer pay rents, all rights of forest and pasture become free, and all manner of tolls for markets and mills cease. Every peasant on clerical land becomes a freeman holding directly under the King, in other words, a peasant proprietor. This is perhaps the most radical reform proposed by the insurgents in 1381, and its success would have created in the English commonwealth of the fourteenth century a more powerful and prosperous body of free peasants than the nineteenth was able to show.

The idea of confiscating the lands of the clergy was not peculiar to the insurgents, but had long been maintained by the Mendicant Friars. Wycliffe's pronounced views on clerical disendowment are well known,<sup>1</sup> while even such a conservative as the author of *Piers Plowman* urged that the clergy be compelled to live on their tenths.<sup>2</sup> Threats of spoliation had ere this been used by John of Gaunt and the Lancaster party as a political lever against the clergy, and had even been made in Parliament.<sup>3</sup> The marked novelty of the demands of the insurgents is their plan of raising the common people upon the ruin of the clergy. All other plans of confiscation had advocated strengthening the middle and upper classes. Wycliffe's ideal was to aid poor gentlemen, who would justly govern the people and maintain the land against its enemies,<sup>4</sup> while later Lollard Parliaments advocated temporary confiscation for needs of war, or else the creation of new earls, knights, and esquires,<sup>5</sup> both being plans for obtaining increased military services, thereby lightening taxation. The insurgents, however, wished clerical confiscation to improve the economic condition of the common people at large.

The confiscation of the landed possessions of the monasteries

<sup>1</sup> He even considers the possessions of the clergy to be the chief cause of the revolt. *De Blasphemia* (Wycliffe Soc. 1893), 190, 202.

<sup>2</sup> B, XV. 526. Cf. the important additions of the C text, XVIII. 228 ff.

<sup>3</sup> See the interesting speech in Parliament preserved by Wycliffe. *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*, XXI.

<sup>4</sup> *Select English Works*, II. 216-217.

<sup>5</sup> Walsingham, II. 265, 282-283; *Ann. Henr.*, 393-394; Stubbs, III. (5th ed.) 49, 65, 85.

would have meant their dissolution. This demand was only an expression of the general bitter feeling against them, and the general conviction that they were not fulfilling the high purposes for which they had been founded, but had become useless and attenuated. In addition to this, they were hated as being hard and conservative landlords, who in this age of change clung tenaciously to ancient rights over their tenants, and persistently held down the towns which grew up in their domains. A very important part of the revolt in 1381 was a general uprising of the subjects and tenants of monasteries, especially of mesne towns like St. Alban's and St. Edmundsbury. The insurgents, however, showed moderation in the provision for the reasonable sustenance of the possessioners, which would of course include pensions for monks and the hierarchy.

While the articles just discussed would deprive the bishops of their revenues they would not necessarily abolish the episcopacy. This would have been no new proposal, but one often made by Wycliffe. Although the general feeling against the prelates was not as strong as that against the monasteries, they were at this period quite generally condemned for their worldliness and as men who were more attached to secular work in the King's service than to their spiritual duties.<sup>1</sup>

The insurgents propose a radical change in their third religious demand: that there be but one bishop for all England. This novel proposition is quite in line with their political ideal: their church government was modeled on that of the state. As a democratic King, uninfluenced by the upper classes, was to rule in affairs temporal, a democratic bishop was to be supreme in affairs spiritual. The demand for a single head of the church was no doubt influenced by the desire of the insurgents to place John Ball, their chief religious leader at the head of the church. The *Chronicle*, which has recorded these articles, tells us on another occasion that such was Ball's own wish,<sup>2</sup> and two other contemporaries report rumors to the effect that the insurgents propose to make him Archbishop of Canterbury.<sup>3</sup>

The abolition of the hierarchy, as well as the disestablishment of monasteries, would have chiefly accrued to the benefit of the parish priests. As is well known, at this period the tithes of the parishes had quite generally been appropriated by non-resident pre-

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan, *Age of Wycliffe*, 106-111.

<sup>2</sup> *An. Fr. Chr.*, 512.

<sup>3</sup> Mon. Evesham: "Quem, ut dicebatur, si habuissent eorum nephandum propositum, in archiepiscopum, Cantuariæ erexissem." Walsingham tells us that, after his speech at Blackheath, Ball was acclaimed Archbishop of Canterbury and chancellor of the realm. *Hist. Angl.*, II. 33.

ates or monks, who employed poor and often incompetent curates, at the lowest possible wages, to perform their religious duties. The evils of this system were recognized in the fourteenth century, even by the bishops, and it was mainly because of their detrimental influence on the parish priests that Wycliffe desired the abolition of monasteries and the hierarchy.<sup>1</sup> In making the same demands the rebels probably had these points in mind. It seems no mere coincidence that so many of the lesser clergy were involved in the revolt. Ball was himself a chaplain; so was John Wrawe, chief leader of the Sussex rebels, and Galfrid Parfay, another ringleader, was vicar. In that county seven clergymen were among the leaders, while in other shires similar, though more isolated, instances are found.<sup>2</sup> Another powerful bond between the lower clergy and the people was the fact that the former had since the pestilence of 1348-1349 been engaged in a struggle with the hierarchy for living wages and consequently sympathized with the peasants in their fight against the statute of laborers.<sup>3</sup>

Nothing in regard to the papacy is stated in the insurgents' demands; but the abolition of the hierarchy alone, to say nothing of the other radical reforms proposed, would have necessarily involved a separation from Rome. That their attitude towards the Pope was one of indifference is further indicated by their reputed reply to the Archbishop of Canterbury, who, when on the point of being executed, threatened them with a papal interdict. They answered that they feared neither Pope nor interdict.<sup>4</sup>

A study of these Smithfield articles certainly overturns the generally accepted view that the insurgents were good churchmen, who objected to prelates as bad ministers only and to monasteries as oppressive landlords.<sup>5</sup> Their chief leaders, backed by the most formidable division of the rebels, were religious reformers of the most advanced type. True, the reforms demanded are rather institutional than doctrinal, and we find no dissatisfaction expressed with the ritual and usages of the church. But even Wycliffe had just begun to announce his final views on the eucharist, or, at any rate, these views were just beginning to become generally known.<sup>6</sup> At the

<sup>1</sup> Trevelyan, as above, 122-123, where sources are cited.

<sup>2</sup> *Rot. Parl.*, III. 111; Powell, *East Anglia Rising*, 14; Réville, 180.

<sup>3</sup> Wilkins, *Concilia*, III. 1-2; *Rot. Parl.*, II. 271; *Statutes*, I. 373-374; Knighton, II. 63; *Piers Plowman*, A. prol., 180.

<sup>4</sup> Walsingham, *Hist. Angl.*, I. 459.

<sup>5</sup> Trevelyan, as above, 200, 200-201; Réville, *Soulèvement*, 123-125.

<sup>6</sup> His public confession of these views is dated 10 May, 1381 (*Fasc. Ziz.*, 115, p. 1.); but it is doubtful whether he had promulgated them just before this or at an earlier period. *Ibid.*, 104; cf. F. D. Matthew, *Eng. Hist. Review*, V. 329-330.

time of his death he had not rejected the celebration of the mass, as is shown by the fact that he died while hearing it. These demands of the insurgents are not only in themselves radical, but in one respect they go further than any religious requirements ever made in England, viz., in their democratic tendencies. From the economic standpoint this was the most democratic reformation of the church ever proposed.

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